

Students' Perceptions of the English Day Program as A Speaking Skill Booster

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Abstract: *This study explores Grade 7 students' perceptions of the planned implementation of the English Day Program at MTs Attaqwa 17 as an effort to enhance their English speaking skills. The program aims to encourage students to use English in daily school interactions. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The findings indicate that students generally have positive perceptions of the program, believing it could improve their confidence and fluency in speaking. Nevertheless, challenges such as fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary mastery, and speaking anxiety were identified. Students suggested incorporating enjoyable and supportive activities, such as games, peer partnerships, and teacher encouragement, to increase engagement. The study concludes that successful implementation of the English Day Program requires a gradual, student-centered approach supported by teachers and the school environment.*

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a primary medium of communication that allows people to express ideas, feelings, and knowledge in social and academic contexts. In the era of globalization, English proficiency has become an essential skill, as English functions as the dominant international language in education, technology, and intercultural communication (Pratiwi, 2021). In Indonesia, English is taught from elementary to secondary levels. However, many students continue to face difficulties, particularly in speaking skills. This problem arises because English teaching in schools tends to emphasize grammar and writing rather than oral practice (Afidawati et al., 2024).

Speaking is a productive skill that requires learners to use linguistic, cognitive, and affective aspects simultaneously in real time communication (Richards, 2015). Many students experience speaking anxiety, low confidence, and a strong fear of making mistakes when using English (Sitorus & Ananda, 2020). These challenges are often worsened by the lack of English speaking environments in schools, where students rarely have the opportunity to practice authentic communication (Arianti & Rahman, 2020).

To address these challenges, one of the strategies developed in many educational institutions is the English Day Program, which encourages students and teachers to use English in daily interactions within the school environment. This program aligns with the principle of language immersion, emphasizing continuous exposure to the target language as a way to accelerate acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2017). Previous studies have shown that the English Day

Program can significantly improve students' speaking skills (Amin & Cahyono, 2023; Fitriyani & Rahayu, 2019). Sari and Hidayat (2019) further revealed that when the program includes interactive activities such as debates, role plays, and games it helps students become more confident and willing to communicate.

However, the success of such a program does not merely depend on enforcing an English-only rule. Research by Nugraha and Putri (2022) emphasizes that the English Day initiative should be meaningful, engaging, and supported by teachers and peers. Without sufficient guidance, variety, and feedback, the program risks becoming a formality rather than an effective learning tool (Fitriyani & Rahayu, 2019). Therefore, understanding students' perceptions before implementation is essential to ensure that the program meets their needs and readiness.

This study focuses on investigating the perceptions of seventh-grade students at MTs Attaqwa 17 toward the planned implementation of the English Day Program as a means of improving their speaking skills. Students' perceptions play a vital role in determining their motivation, engagement, and participation in the program (Eccles & Wigfield, 2022). By exploring how students view the program its potential benefits, challenges, and expectations this study aims to provide valuable insights for developing a student centered and sustainable English Day Program in the school context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking is one of the key skills in English language learning, as it allows students to express ideas, share opinions, and interact in real-life communication. However, many students still struggle with speaking due to anxiety, lack of vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes (Sitorus & Ananda, 2020). Richards (2015) emphasizes that speaking competence involves fluency, accuracy, and interactional skills, which require consistent practice and meaningful exposure to the language. Therefore, English teachers must create an environment that encourages authentic communication and builds students' confidence.

One school-based initiative that supports this goal is the English Day Program, which encourages students to use English in daily interactions. The program aligns with the *language immersion* approach that emphasizes consistent exposure to the target language for effective acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 2017). Studies have shown that English Day activities help improve students' pronunciation, fluency, and confidence (Amin & Cahyono, 2023; Sari & Hidayat, 2019). However, ineffective implementation such as overly strict rules or lack of fun activities can reduce motivation and engagement (Nugraha & Putri, 2022).

Students' perceptions play an important role in determining the success of such programs. According to Eccles and Wigfield (2022), learners' willingness to participate in learning activities depends on how valuable and achievable they perceive the tasks to be. Positive perceptions foster motivation, while negative ones may create resistance or anxiety (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Research by Arianti and Rahman (2020) found that students who viewed the English Day positively felt more confident and enthusiastic in speaking English. Similarly, Hasanah and Sari (2020) reported that positive perceptions improved students' intrinsic motivation to communicate.

Despite its potential, several challenges may affect English Day implementation. These include low teacher involvement, lack of supportive school culture, and limited peer encouragement (Fitriyani & Rahayu, 2019). MacIntyre et al. (2022) highlight that psychological barriers such as fear of evaluation also hinder students' willingness to speak. Conversely, supportive peers and teachers can reduce anxiety and promote a positive learning environment (Liu & Thompson, 2018). Thus, fostering both structural and emotional support is essential for program effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a case study design. The case study method was chosen to provide an in depth understanding of students' perceptions toward the planned implementation of the English Day Program at MTs Attaqwa 17 Bekasi. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore students' experiences, opinions, and attitudes in a natural setting (Creswell, 2014).

The research was conducted at MTs Attaqwa 17 Bekasi during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants consisted of 30 seventh-grade students who were selected through purposive sampling, as they were directly related to the program being studied. In addition, one English teacher was involved as a supporting informant to provide additional insight into the school's English learning context.

The data were collected through open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The open-ended questionnaire was distributed to obtain initial responses regarding students' perceptions of the English Day Program. Follow-up interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into their feelings, expectations, and potential challenges related to the program. Observations were also carried out to understand the students' interaction and English usage in school activities.

The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model (2014), which consists of three main stages: (1) data reduction, in which the researcher summarized and selected relevant information; (2) data display, where data were organized into categories and themes; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, where findings were interpreted and validated through triangulation between questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

To ensure data credibility, triangulation was applied by comparing information from different instruments and participants. This approach helped strengthen the validity of the findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of the English Day Program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal the students' perceptions toward the planned implementation of the English Day Program at MTs Attaqwa 17 Bekasi. Data were obtained through open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The analysis using Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model (2014) produced three main themes: students' enthusiasm and motivation, perceived challenges, and suggestions for improvement.

Most students showed a positive attitude toward the English Day Program. They expressed excitement and believed that the program could enhance their confidence and fluency in speaking English. They also viewed it as an enjoyable way to practice English more frequently in daily communication. This finding aligns with Eccles and Wigfield (2022), who emphasize that positive perceptions increase motivation and active participation in learning activities.

However, students also mentioned several challenges, such as limited vocabulary, anxiety about making mistakes, and embarrassment when speaking in front of others. These issues are consistent with Sitorus and Ananda (2020), who state that fear of failure and low self efficacy often hinder EFL learners from speaking actively. Moreover, some students highlighted that teacher encouragement and classroom support were not always consistent, which reduced their willingness to speak English outside formal lessons.

Students also offered several constructive suggestions for improving the program. They proposed incorporating fun and interactive activities such as storytelling, games, and peer collaboration to make English Day more engaging. They also hoped for teacher assistance in

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guiding pronunciation and vocabulary use during conversations. These findings are supported by Sari and Hidayat (2019), who noted that enjoyable and interactive learning activities can effectively build students' confidence and lower speaking anxiety.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Perceptions of the English Day Program

Themes	Key Findings
Enthusiasm and Motivation	Students felt excited and believed the program could help them speak English more confidently and fluently.
Perceived Challenges	Students reported limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, and lack of teacher encouragement as main obstacles.
Suggestions for Improvement	Students suggested adding fun and interactive activities such as games, storytelling, and teacher guidance.

Overall, the results indicate that students perceive the English Day Program positively as a strategy to improve their speaking skills and confidence. Nevertheless, successful implementation requires consistent teacher involvement, meaningful activities, and a supportive learning environment. These findings reinforce Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2021) theory that learners' motivation and perceptions are essential factors in sustaining effective language learning programs.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the students' perceptions of the planned implementation of the English Day Program at MTs Attaqwa 17 Bekasi. The findings revealed that most students held positive perceptions toward the program, viewing it as an effective way to enhance their speaking skills and confidence in using English in daily communication. The students expressed enthusiasm and motivation to participate, believing that consistent practice through English Day could help them overcome fear and hesitation in speaking.

However, several challenges were identified, including limited vocabulary, anxiety about making mistakes, and inconsistent teacher support. These factors were found to influence students' willingness to speak and engage actively during English Day activities. To address these issues, students suggested that the program incorporate enjoyable and interactive learning activities such as games, storytelling, and peer-based collaboration. They also emphasized the importance of teacher guidance to help improve pronunciation, vocabulary use, and overall participation.

In conclusion, the English Day Program has strong potential to be implemented successfully as a strategy to improve students' speaking skills, provided that it is supported by engaging activities, continuous teacher involvement, and a positive learning atmosphere. This study highlights the importance of understanding students' perceptions prior to implementation, as these perceptions directly influence motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Future studies are encouraged to examine the long-term impact of the English Day Program once it is fully applied in the school context.

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